GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:5864
ANSWERED ON:03.05.2000
CLINTON`S PAK VISIT
RAGHUNANDAN LAL BHATIA

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether attention of the Government has been drawn to the news-item captioned `US justifies decision of Clinton`s visit to Pakistan` appearing in the Hindustan Times dated March 9, 2000;

(b) if so, the facts of the matter reported therein; and

(c) the reaction of the Government thereto?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

(SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA)

(a) Yes, Sir. Government has seen the news item referred to in the Question.

(b) The news item is based on comments attributed to an unnamed US Administration official on the reason for President Clinton`s brief stopover in Islamabad. The US has stated that the purpose of President Clinton`s stopover in Islamabad was to seek, among other things, an early return to democracy, a crackdown on terrorist groups and a real effort to create the conditions for dialogue with India.

(c) It was Government`s consistent position that it is the prerogative of visiting heads of state to choose their itinerary as also decide his/their programme. This is in accord with all established diplomatic norms and international practise. Accordingly, when President Clinton personally called PM to inform him of US reasons for going to Pakistan this was reiterated.PM did, however, let it be known that whatever the US reasons, the military regime in Pakistan would portray the action as a signal of US support and endorsement. That is why, thereafter, the US publicly stated, on a number of occasions, that the stop over in no way legitimises or endorses the military take over in Pakistan.